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ABSTRACT

The influence of type of residence, institution or community, on the direction and/or realism of vocational interest was investigated using 60 sheltered workshop-employed, mentally retarded young adults. The Picture Interest Inventory was used as the measure of vocational interest. Statistical analysis of cell means indicated that the community-based group scored significantly higher ($p < .05$) on both the mechanical and scientific interest scales. Further, the community-based group scored consistently lower ($p < .10$) than the institutionalized group on the time perspective scale, which is an indication of more realistic vocational interests for mentally retarded persons. The results of this study seem to suggest that the influence of institutional settings on the development of vocational interest for the mentally retarded is in a narrowed and unrealistic direction. (Author)

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The Influence of Residential Setting on
Vocational Interests

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Running Head: Influence of Residence on Vocational Interests

Abstract

The influence of type of residence, institution or community, on the direction and/or realism of vocational interest was investigated using 60 sheltered workshop-employed, mentally retarded young adults. The Picture Interest Inventory was used as the measure of vocational interest. Statistical analysis of cell means indicated that the community-based group scored significantly higher ($p. \leq .05$) on both the mechanical and scientific interest scales. Further, the community-based group scored consistently lower ($p. \leq .10$) than the institutionalized group on the time perspective scale, which is an indication of more realistic vocational interests for mentally retarded persons. The results of this study seem to suggest that the influence of institutional settings on the development of vocational interest for the mentally retarded is in a narrowed and unrealistic direction.

The Influence of Residential Setting on
Vocational Interests

It is generally conceded that the development or direction of vocational interests are influenced by various environmental factors. Ross and Ross (1957) found that early parental rejection resulted in a choice of working with things rather than with people. This finding was viewed as being consistent with Roe's personality theory of career choice (1956, 1957). Other studies seem to indicate that geographic location is also a factor which influences vocational interest.

The subject of realism in vocational interest has been the specific concern of numerous other investigations (Empey, 1956; Lawrence, 1950; Lee and King, 1964; Gorelick, Note 1). The results of these studies have tended to indicate that the factors of low economic status and minority group membership are inversely related to realism in vocational interest. This relationship of deprivation and realism is viewed as being in agreement with the developmental theory of Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrod, and Herma (1951).

With regard to the vocational interests of the mentally retarded, the studies conducted by Burg and Barrett (1965) and Parnicky, Kahn, and Burdett (1965) seemed to indicate that the environmental factor of type of training facility was a selective

influence on the direction of resulting vocational interest patterns.

It was the purpose of the present study, while controlling for the type of training facility, to examine whether type of residence, institution or community, would selectively influence the direction and/or realism of vocational interest among the mentally retarded.

Method

Subjects

The subjects of the study were 60 sheltered workshop-employed, mentally retarded young adults. Each of the subjects were Caucasian, 18 to 26 years of age, with I.Q.'s ranging from 50 to 79, and were not multiply handicapped. The subjects were divided into two residential groups (n=30) according to their particular form of residence. Both groups included equal numbers of males and females and had equivalent mean I.Q. scores. The institutionalized subjects were tested at the Caravel Workshop in Belchertown, Massachusetts and Goodwill Industries in Springfield, Massachusetts. The community based subjects were tested at the Work Opportunity Center in West Springfield, Massachusetts and the Constructive Workshop in New Britain, Connecticut.

Instrument and Procedure

The Picture Interest Inventory (PII) was administered to both groups of subjects, institutional and community based. This

instrument yielded six vocational interest scales and a supplemental scale utilized in this study as an indication of vocational realism. The areas of vocational interest measured by the PII were interpersonal service, natural, mechanical, business, scientific, and esthetic. The indicator of realism was the time perspective scale. Following the collection of data, an analysis of variance was conducted to determine whether the two groups differed, at the 0.05 level of significance, on any of the seven scales measured.

Results

Table 1 presents the mean scores for both groups on each PII scale along with the F-ratios which were generated. The two residential groups were found to differ significantly on two of the seven scales.

Place Table I about here

The community-based group scored higher on both the mechanical and scientific scales than did their institutionalized counterparts. Although not statistically different, the institutionalized sample was observed to score higher on the interpersonal service scale. The other areas of vocational interest (business, natural, and esthetic) did not differ markedly.

Although the community-based group scored consistently lower on the time perspective scale than did the institutionalized group, the difference found was only significant at the .10 level. Since a lower time perspective score is thought to be indicative of more realistic vocational interest for the mentally retarded, the results suggest that community residence has some positive effect on this dimension.

Discussion

The results seem to indicate that a relationship does exist between kind of residence and the direction or realism of vocational interest for mentally retarded young adults. It would appear that some difference in environment seems to cause the community-based group to express increased interest in those occupations seen as being mechanical and scientific in nature.

With regard to mechanical vocational interest, it is thought that the community environment provides more exposure to activities and information of a mechanical, problem-solving nature. The community-based subject has more likely observed or assisted adults in performing minor repairs within or around the household and has probably been exposed to the activities of professional workmen that have been summoned to the home. Further, outside of his immediate home environment, he may have observed the activities surrounding a local garage or workman in the streets of his

neighborhood. In contrast, the institutionalized person probably does not experience, to the same degree, these activities. Within the institution, repairs and maintenance are most likely performed by the custodial staff, who may be less likely to take out time to explain the tasks being conducted to an onlooking resident or to allow him to assist than would a parent or independent repairman. Also, unlike the home environment, many of the mechanical equipment or gadgets are either hidden from the resident of the institution or are completely absent.

In regard to scientific vocational interest, again, this difference may be considered to be the result of degree in environmental exposure. Perhaps the community-based subject has had the benefit of more exposure to the varied components of our mass media than has his institutionalized counterpart. Science fiction movies, moon landings, and other happenings in the field of science are likely to be received or viewed in more abundance by the person residing in a home environment rather than within an institution.

Although not statistically significant, the institutional sample was observed to score somewhat higher on the interpersonal service scale than did the community-based group. This tendency may be the result of the limited interaction existing within the institutional setting. Perhaps a greater need for interpersonal

interaction was manifested in the choice of vocational interests of an interpersonal nature.

It should be mentioned that the findings of this study have not supported what would be expected in accordance with Roe's theory (1956). One would have expected the institutionalized subject to choose vocations not involving direct contact with other people. Therefore, we would expect that the institutionalized retardate would score higher on the mechanical, scientific, natural and esthetic scales, while scoring lower on the business and interpersonal service scales. The failure of the data to coincide with Roe's theory was not totally unexpected, since numerous other studies have obtained similar discrepancies (Grigg, 1959; Utton, 1962; Switzer, Grigg, Miller, and Young, 1962; Roe and Siezelman, 1962).

Although statistical assurance is lacking, the community-based group scored consistently lower on the time perspective scale than did the institutional group. This was interpreted to be a tendency of the community-based subjects to be more realistic in their vocational interests. This tendency would seem to suggest a possible relationship between degree of environmental exposure and degree of realism in vocational interest as espoused by the Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrod, and Herma theory (1951).

Finally, the results of this study seem to suggest that the influence of institutional settings on the development of

vocational interest for the mentally retarded is in a narrowed and unrealistic direction. This apparent trend points to a real need for occupational information programs within our institutions prior to the launching of counseling efforts aimed at vocational placement.

Reference Notes

1. Gorelick, M.D. An assessment of vocational realism of high school and post high school educationally mentally retarded adolescents. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Association on Mental Deficiency, Denver, Colorado, May 1967.

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Table 1
Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and F Ratios for the Seven PII
Scales for Institutionalized (I) and Community-Based (C) Groups

PII Scale	Mean Score		Standard Deviation		F Ratio
	I	C	I	C	
Mechanical	14.87	21.03	5.76	8.54	10.39*
Scientific	13.40	16.17	4.17	4.22	6.27*
Time Perspective	8.93	7.77	2.22	2.73	3.19**
Interpersonal	25.27	23.17	7.46	6.75	2.03
Business	29.60	28.37	9.61	9.30	-
Natural	21.90	21.47	8.76	8.23	-
Esthetic	21.80	21.73	5.50	4.64	-

* $p < .05$

** $p < .10$